

NH Dredge Management Task Force Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2008

The meeting was held on Wednesday, September 10, 2008 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at the Department of Environmental Services (DES)/New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP) Office, 50 International Drive, Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH.

Introductions/Announcements - Chairman Chris Williams asked members to introduce themselves. The list of attendees follows.

Attending members in alphabetical order:

Steve Bird, City of Dover
Olga Guza, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Richard Heidebrecht, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
Sarah Holmes, Office of Congresswoman Shea-Porter
Chris Holt, Portsmouth Pilots/Moran Towing
Clare McBane, NH Fish & Game Department (NHF&G)
Eric Nestler, Normandeau Assoc.
Dean Peschel, City of Dover
Frank Richardson, DES Wetlands Bureau
Tracy Shattuck, Pease Development Authority-Division of Ports and Harbors (PDA-DPH)
Fred Short, UNH Jackson Lab
Michael Sills, DES Waste Management Division
Michael Walsh, ACOE

Guests:

Dr. Kevin Gardner, Director, Center for Contaminated Sediments Research, UNH

Staff:

Chris Williams, Chairman, NH Coastal Program (NHCP)
Mary Power, NHCP

Legislative update - Chairman asked Sarah Holmes of Congresswoman Shea-Porter's Office to give the members an update on dredging-related activities in the U.S. House of Representatives. Holmes stated that the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill made it out of committee but has yet to be voted on by the full House. The bill included \$82,000 for continued investigations for the Piscataqua River (turning basin expansion) and \$124,000 for Operations and Maintenance in Hampton Harbor. The bill also included language for the Section 107 Program for Hampton Harbor, however, funding was not specified. Holmes also stated that she met with Ted Diers of the NHCP in July to discuss NH's efforts to secure funding to identify a new offshore dredge material disposal site. She stated that Congresswoman Shea-Porter's legislative director is working with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on that issue. Chairman Williams reminded members that NH's #1 priority Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) project for inclusion in the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2009 is the Regional Dredge Material Management Plan, which would identify offshore and upland sites for

disposal of dredge materials. Chairman asked Holmes if she had any idea of the timing of a House vote on the bill. She stated that due to the upcoming election, the budget would likely go to a continuing resolution. As a result, there would like be no action taken until next year.

Guest Presentation

Chairman Williams introduced Dr. Kevin Gardner, Associate Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and the Director of the Environmental Research Group there, which focuses on applied environmental engineering and science research. Dr. Gardner is also the Director of the Contaminated Sediments Center at UNH, which focuses on the beneficial uses of dredged sediments. Dr. Gardner gave a presentation summarizing some of the contaminated sediment research taking place at UNH. The presentation was followed by questions and discussion. Dr. Gardner's presentation can be found on the NH Dredge Management Task Force web site at: <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/dmtf/meetings/index.htm>.

Project Updates

- ***Piscataqua River Turning Basin Feasibility Study, Including Disposal Alternatives*** - Dick Heidebrecht (ACOE) stated that the ACOE continues to review the upper turning basin alternatives based, in part, on information they have received from the pilots who work the river. He continued by saying that the ACOE is considering expanding the turning basin to the north. This decision will be based, in part, on the result of the final seismic and the boring data that is being completed. Heidebrecht stated that borings found additional bedrock. Chair asked where the bedrock was found. Heidebrecht state that it is located in the center of the existing turning basin. Discussion followed regarding the proposed dimensions and shape of the expanded turning basin. Chair asked if the ACOE is still scheduled to meet next week with Dr. Fred Short of UNH to look at known eel grass areas in the vicinity of the proposed basin expansion area. Affirmative. Chair then asked for discussion about the plan that the river pilots submitted at the last meeting. Chris Holt of Moran Towing paraphrased Dick Holt's comments about turning a ship in the Piscataqua by saying there is virtually no slack tide in this river. When a ship is being turned it is spinning to the left or right as well as moving north and south with the current. As a result, he suggested a basin shaped like a rectangle with bowed ends for optimum turning space rather than a circular basin. Heidebrecht then stated that the ACOE is updating the economic data for the project to incorporate removal of the recently discovered rock in the turning basin. Mike Sills (DES Waste Management Division) asked when project construction would likely begin. Heidebrecht stated it would likely be at least four to five years. Chairman Williams asked about dredge material disposal options. Heidebrecht stated that there are a number of disposal options. He stated that the town of Elliot, Maine has an upland site that could use some of the material. Chairman asked at what point the ACOE would have an understanding of the overall volume of material to be dredged and the composition of that material. Heidebrecht stated that the ACOE has preliminary estimates of total volume and material composition, however, these numbers remain preliminary until the dredging begins. Heidebrecht state the once the ACOE has calibrated the geophysics to the borings and probes, a much clearer picture will emerge. Chairman asked if there were any other comments on this topic. Clare McBane (NH Fish & Game) stated that NH Fish & Game is opposed to any in-river disposal of the dredge material.

- *Cocheco River Maintenance Dredge* - Chairman Williams asked Mike Walsh (ACOE) to provide an update on the project. Walsh stated that due to insufficient funding the ACOE will not be dredging the Cocheco River this coming dredge season. He continued by saying that the ACOE de-scoped the project to fit the remaining available funds but in doing so they didn't have an accurate idea of how doing so would escalate the per-yard cost. As it turns out, decreasing the quantity of material to be dredged didn't save as much money as hoped. Ultimately, the ACOE did not have enough money to administer the contract, complete the dredging and pay the disposal fees to the City of Dover. Walsh stated that the ACOE will be meeting with the City of Dover and the NH Congressional delegation soon to discuss next steps. At the last meeting between the ACOE, the City and the Congressional delegation, the delegation showed little optimism for the prospects of future federal funding for the project. If additional money is not made available, the ACOE will use the remaining available funds to close up the disposal facility and pay the remaining disposal fees to the City. This would leave that portion of the federal channel below the lower narrows un-dredged. Dean Peschel (City of Dover) confirmed Walsh's comments. Walsh stated that total appropriations to date amount to approximately \$8.8 million, with expenditures to date of \$ 7 million. Walsh then stated that an additional \$2 million needs to be appropriated to complete the dredging. Chair asked if the additional \$2 million would enable the ACOE to dredge to a depth of -5 feet mlw. Walsh said that it should enable them to dredge to -6 feet mlw, however, the City of Dover would first need to update its projections regarding the cost of the disposal facility. Walsh stated that if the additional \$2 million were made available in Fiscal Year 2010, the ACOE would not be able to conduct any dredging because it would coincide with the beginning of the 2009/2010 dredge window. The ACOE, therefore, would not be able to dredge again until the fall of 2010. That would mean the disposal facility will have to remain open for another two years, which would be costly. Discussion followed.

Frank Richardson (DES Wetlands Bureau) asked how severely recreational boat tours and similar activities would be limited by the suspension of dredging activities. Walsh said George Maglaras (George's Marina) would be the best person to answer that question. Richardson stated that perhaps a portion of the remaining money for the project could be spent removing the "high" spots in the river, thereby lessening the navigational risk. Walsh stated that this past dredging contract was an attempt to do just that, and proved to be too costly for the amount of available funding. Richardson then asked if the City of Dover would accept dredge materials from other sources at its disposal facility. He stated that the Hampton Marina currently has an application before the Wetlands Bureau for a dredging project in which the dredged materials are proposed to be hauled to a gravel pit in Raymond. Mike Sills (DES Waste Management Division) stated that the material would first have to be sampled. He added that because the disposal facility was built specifically for the materials dredged from the Cocheco River maintenance dredging project, the City would have to go through a public hearing process if it were to consider disposal of dredge materials from other projects at its facility. Peschel stated that the disposal facility is permitted through DES so if the dredge materials are acceptable to DES and the City can get a waiver to accept them, the City would gladly take them. Sills stated that he'd coordinate with Richardson and work out a sampling schedule for the Hampton Marina project. Discussion followed.

- *Hampton Section 107 Feasibility Study Report & Future of Half-Tide Jetty* – Dick Heidebrecht (ACOE) stated that in early August he met with staff from PDA-DPH, the NHCP and Barbaros Celikkol and Larry Ward of UNH, to discuss the potential impact the half-tide jetty may be having on shoaling rates in the Hampton Harbor channel and anchorages. Dr. Celikkol and Dr. Ward contributed in the preparation of the 2002 report prepared for the PDA-DPH entitled Hydrodynamic Investigation of Hampton/Seabrook Harbor New Hampshire. At the meeting, there was general

agreement that the half-tide jetty has minimal, if any, effect on shoaling rates. Based on the discussion at the meeting, the ACOE will proceed with the Feasibility Study Report and make a recommendation that the half-tide jetty be repaired. Heidebrecht stated that repair of the jetty, however, will not be a condition of the ACOE's decision to assume responsibility for future maintenance of the anchorages. Frank Richardson (DES Wetlands Bureau) asked if the ACOE has a specific recommendation as to how the jetty should be repaired. Heidebrecht stated that if repairs are made within the existing jetty footprint there would be no ACOE permit required. He agreed to review old surveys and/or plans to determine the original specifications of the jetty. Richardson stated that the residents of Sun Valley, the residential area landward of the jetty, have requested modification of the jetty to increase wave attenuation. He suggested adding rocks to the jetty for that purpose and to protect the oceanfront properties located landward of the jetty. Discussion followed. Chairman asked if reconstruction of the stone revetment along the shoreline landward of the jetty has been completed. Richardson stated that the revetment has not been constructed. Discussion followed.

- ***Sagamore Creek Maintenance Dredge*** - Walsh (ACOE) stated that data/information from recent benthic sampling of the proposed near-shore disposal site offshore from Wallis Sands Beach is currently being analyzed/processed. When results are available, he hopes to receive the final go-ahead to start the agency coordination process. He continued by saying that he plans to begin work on the Environmental Assessment (EA) next year. Once the EA is complete, it's primarily a matter of securing funding before dredging can begin.

- ***Piscataquau River "Simplex Shoal" Maintenance Dredge*** - Chairman removed this item from the agenda. He stated that a meeting between the ACOE, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the NH Fish & Game Department, PDA-DPH and the NHCP to discuss the Simplex Shoal project has been scheduled for next week. He agreed to review the meeting with members at the next Task Force meeting.

Other Business

- ***Little Harbor & Rye Harbor Hydrographic Condition Surveys*** - Walsh (ACOE) stated that surveys of both harbors have been completed and there is nothing alarming to report. He requested that if members are aware of shoaling in either harbor, they identify the shoaling areas so that the ACOE can focus its attention to these problem areas during its review of the surveys. After reviewing the surveys, the ACOE will make a determination as to whether either harbor should be included in the ACOE's current maintenance dredge schedule. Chairman asked if Tracy Shattuck, PDA-DPH Chief Harbormaster, could provide the shoaling information requested by Walsh. Shattuck agreed to identify the areas of concern on aerial photos of the harbors provided by Walsh. Discussion followed.

- ***Other items*** - Chairman asked members if they had other issues to discuss. Olga Guza (EPA) stated that the New England Regional Dredging Team (a.k.a. Sudbury Group) meeting will be meeting on October 21, 2008 in Sudbury Mass.

- ***Schedule next DMTF meeting*** – Due to the lack of active dredging projects occurring in the upcoming dredge season, the Chairman suggested meeting after the holidays in January. He suggested January 14, 2009 at 1:30 PM at the DES Pease office. All agreed.

Adjourned 3:00 PM